THE SUPREME ADVENTURE

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THE SUPREME ADVENTURE

OR THE LIFE OF THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

BY

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"THE PRIEST AS CONFESSOR"

LONDON

COPE & FENWICK

THE FAITH HOUSE

22, BUCKINGHAM STREET, STRAND, W.C.

1915

242.35
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TO

OUR BLESSED LADY,

FULL OF GRACE ON EARTH AND OF GLORY IN HEAVEN,

PRAISED OF THE HOLY GHOST FOR HER FAITH, TRIUMPHING THROUGH HER HOPE IN JESUS, AND SURPASSING ALL CREATURES IN HER LOVE FOR HIM, THE STAR OF THE SEA GUIDING BY HER BRIGHT EXAMPLE AND AIDING BY HER MIGHTY PRAYERS THE VOYAGERS OF ALL GENERATIONS WHO CALL HER BLESSED,

THIS BOOK IS HUMBLY DEDICATED.

Respice stellam, voca Mariam.
St. Bernard

INTRODUCTION

THE Baptismal Service exhibits the Christian life as a voyage, a "passing the waves of this troublesome life" to come finally "to the land of everlasting life." And the secret of a safe passage lies in the cultivation of the theological virtues. The three notes of the true voyager are these: "Stedfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity."

On these virtues treatises have been written by theologians for theologians. But a simple account of their use and the dangers which threaten them may not be without value for many ordinary Christians

who, faring forth on the supreme adventure, are sometimes storm-tossed and perplexed for lack of precisely this knowledge.

A. H. BAVERSTOCK.

HINTON MARTEL,
Feast of the Assumption, 1915.

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THE SUPREME ADVENTURE

CHAPTER I

THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

THE importance of the three theological virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity, in the Christian Life, and the necessity of their cultivation if we are to make any advance in that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord," is too little realised among us.

These three virtues are called the "theological" virtues, because by them the three-fold activities of the soul, its cognitions, volitions and affections, are directed towards God. Or, to put the matter more plainly, by Faith the mind is enabled to know God, by Hope the will is

strengthened to serve God, by Charity the heart is given the power to love God. And hence at Baptism these three gifts are implanted in the soul, not, of course, in their perfection, which is a matter of their development, but as germs or potentialities which must be trained and exercised. They are the gifts by which man, renewed in Christ, is enabled to perform the purpose for which he was created, the purpose which sin has defeated. For sin wounded human nature in every part. It inflicted on the mind the wound of ignorance, by reason of which man was hindered from the knowledge of God: it inflicted on the will the wound of infirmity, so that man could no longer serve God, while it corrupted the heart, or affections, turning man from the love of his Creator to the love of creatures. Our

Lord came as the Good Samaritan, pouring into man's wounds the wine and oil of His grace. He banishes the deadly disease of sin, making the man born blind to see, the lame man to leap as an hart, and run in the way of His commandments, the frenzied victim of Satan a lover of Himself.

When Faith has been perfected it will pass into Vision: Hope into Fruition, while Charity alone "abideth," enjoyed in its perfection by those who see and enjoy Him on Whom they have believed, in Whom they have hoped.

Meanwhile our sanctification consists in an increase of Faith, so that the path of the just man "shineth more and more unto the perfect day," an increase of Hope, so that we "go from strength to strength," an increase of Charity, by which we "walk in

love," daily increasing in the love of Him Who first loved us. To use the language of the Book of Common Prayer, we are to be "stedfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity." Faith is to supply the strong convictions which guide and steady the life, Hope the eager resolutions which enable the Christian pilgrim to press forward to his goal, Charity the ardent affections which are our essential response to the Love of God.

And all these energies are catered for, so to speak, by the Church. She teaches her children the Faith, the revelation of God enshrined in her Creeds, that Faith may be developed by its assimilation: instructs them in Prayer and Worship and the Sacraments, that Hope may thereby be exercised and strengthened: sets before them the Law

of God in the Ten Commandments, that Charity may grow by doing for love of God the things which He commands.

Nor is the soul left without the further help of grace to develop and perfect what grace has begun. What Baptism has initiated the other sacraments continue and nourish. Confirmation in particular, as the sacrament which develops the baptismal endowment, aids the soul by the Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost, which have been described as "supernatural habits of the soul by which the Holy Ghost elicits acts of the theological virtues." Of these gifts four, Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel and Knowledge, are intellectual, enabling the mind to grow in the knowledge of God by Faith: the central gift of Fortitude, or Ghostly Strength, reinforces in the

will the energies of Hope: Piety and Holy Fear deepen and purify in the heart the love of God which is Charity. Penance again restores or clarifies spiritual vision, dimmed by sin, renews the power of the will by which after weakening falls the penitent can again rise and serve God, while the energies of charity, which prompted a loving sorrow for sin, are not only reinforced by the proof received of the pardoning Love of God, so that "forgiven much" the soul "loveth much," but intensified by the influx of sanctifying grace which is given, together with the pardon of sin, in this sacrament. And Holy Communion, strengthening and refreshing the soul, repairs waste and renews strength in all these faculties of the soul. Like the honey which Jonathan tasted, it "lightens the eyes"; like the food given to

Elijah it enables us to go on "in the strength of that meat"; it is, moreover, Bread that strengthens and Wine that makes glad the heart of man, a contact with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, inflaming our cold hearts with a renewed love for Him.

Thus the whole machinery of the Church is seen to be a machinery for the development of the three theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity. And lest we should doubt the efficacy of this machinery for its purpose, we have the Lives of the Saints; the great Doctors who set forth by the illumination of the Holy Ghost the truths of the Faith; the Martyrs who were strengthened to endure torture and death for "the better hope"; the Virgins, men and women, who forsook all other loves to follow the Divine Bridegroom.

Small wonder, then, that the Church

bids us pray, in the Collect for the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity: "Almighty and everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope and charity"!

But it is not enough that we should pray for the increase of these gifts and seek the grace given in the holy sacraments for their strengthening. We must aim in our spiritual exercises at their conscious development. We ought to know something of the dangers which threaten them, that we may be on our guard against these dangers, of the practices which exercise them and strengthen their power. This knowledge belongs to the realm of ascetic theology, but that is no reason why the simplest of us should not have some acquaintance with it. We are not all called to be experts in dogmatic theology, but the smallest Christian child must learn the ele-

ments of the faith. Similarly, we may not be equipped for an exhaustive study of ascetic theology, but an elementary knowledge of matters which "belong to our salvation" is incumbent upon us, as we love our souls.

To lay the foundations for such an elementary knowledge is the purpose of these pages.

But before we go on to consider the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity singly, there is one thing which must be said. For purposes of clear thought we distinguish the threefold activities of the soul—the mind, or cognitions, by which it knows; the will, or volitions, by which it resolves; the heart, or affections, by which it loves. Yet in reality the soul is one and indivisible. So too we may distinguish faith, hope and charity, for the same reason. But

we have to remember that grace, "the gift of God," has a unity which answers to the unity of the soul. Hence Faith, Hope and Charity, however convenient it may be to consider them as separate categories, cannot exist apart from each other. None of them has a separate existence. They are an analysis of the response which the soul of man, aided by the grace of God, makes towards Him. Without all of them there is no movement possible of the soul towards God, although one or other of them may preponderate. We may have a faith which is weak in the element of hope or of love, we cannot have faith without hope and love. Perhaps the best way to consider this is by thinking of the relation of the glorified soul to God in the bliss of heaven. It sees Him on Whom it believed, enjoys Him in Whom it

hoped, loves Him to Whom it was drawn by love. We analyse its relation to God into these three acts: yet we are conscious that this relationship is one and indivisible; the clear vision, full enjoyment and ardent love are inseparable.

As it is with the soul in glory, so with the soul in grace: it believes, hopes and loves: all three being involved in its movement towards God. So with our Lord's threefold function of Prophet, Priest and King demanding from us the threefold service of Faith, Hope and Charity: these offices are united in One Person and are distinguished only in thought. Thus, when we speak of exercises of faith, or hope, or charity, we do not mean that these exercises are confined in their effect to strengthening one of the three theological virtues, but that the one element predomin-

ates. For instance, the Mass, as a whole, and every part of it, rightly used, exercises all three virtues. But the early part of the Mass, with its lections from Scripture, with the Creed, and the sermon, the part once known as the Mass of Catechumens, is especially an exercise of faith; the middle part of the service, in which we lift up our hearts to heaven, join with the Company of Heaven in the great Thanksgiving, and offer the Divine Victim given to us by the words of consecration, is especially an exercise of hope; while the Communion is especially an exercise of charity. So again our preparation for a good Communion, by which we cultivate that attitude of soul which is called "the marriage garment required of God in Holy Scripture" may be analysed into a condition of faith, by which we believe firmly not

only the whole truth which God has revealed, but in particular the truth of our Lord's Presence in the Holy Sacrament, a condition of hope or desire, by which we long for the joy of His Presence in heaven, and more immediately still for His coming to us in Communion, a condition of charity, by which we love God and our neighbour and lovingly welcome our Lord to take up His abode with us. But it would be impossible to have either the faith, or the desire, or the love which fits us for Communion, apart from the other two constituent elements of a right condition. It is only in thought that we are able to distinguish qualities which never exist apart.

CHAPTER II

FAITH AND THE FAITH

FAITH comes first in order of the Theological Virtues. For the primary fact about the relation of the Christian to God is that he has a supernatural knowledge of Him. Sin brought as its first consequence an estrangement from God. The gift of God by our Saviour is the knowledge of God by faith, a knowledge which starts from the whole-hearted acceptance of the truth revealed through Christ, and grows in clearness, as faith is exercised and sanctifies the mind, conforming it to the Mind of Christ, until the Vision of God is reached. Hence baptism was called by the early Christians

" illumination," and the Epistle to the Hebrews alludes to it in the words, " after ye were illuminated," [1] and to the baptised as " those who were once enlightened." So the Catholic Church, the School of Christ, taught by His heavenly doctrine and illuminated from within by the light of His Holy Spirit, is figured in the Old Testament by the land of Goshen, where the people of God had light in their dwellings, while Egypt lay in darkness. This light of faith has been called by St. John of the Cross " a clear but obscure light " ; clear in comparison with the darkness of those who lie in unbelief and ignorance of God, obscure in comparison with the Light of the Beatific Vision. St. Paul makes this latter comparison when he says, " Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to

[1] Heb. x. 32.

face,"[1] while the former comparison is found in St. John's constant distinction between those who "abide in the light," and those who "walk in darkness."[2]

If we are to grow towards perfection we must grow in faith and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ which faith brings. And faith is exercised in the acceptance of the Faith. Hence the positive requirement at Baptism that the baptised person shall accept and promise to believe "all the articles of the Christian Faith," as summed up in the Apostles' Creed. The obligation thus incurred too commonly fails to be realised. Parents bring their children to be baptised, and to receive the faculty of faith, promise that they shall believe the Faith, and then

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 12.
[2] 1 St. John i. 6, 7; ii. 9, 10, v. *cp.* v. 20.

bring them up on a medley of religious opinions, and, worse still, with the idea that they are free to believe what they will. So it comes about that we have a large number of professing Christians who fail to cultivate the essential attitude of faith. If they profess to hold the Creeds which they recite, it is with reservations and glosses put upon them which actually contradict their truths. And the result of this is very serious. For the Creed is not a collection of detached truths, but a summary of the truth, which has an organic unity. So that to disbelieve one article of the truth is in reality to disbelieve in some measure every article. To refuse belief in the Catholic Church does not leave faith in the Blessed Trinity intact: it involves a disbelief in the Holy Ghost Who indwells the Church; in the Son

of God, the Head of the Church; in the Eternal Father, Who reveals Himself through Christ by the workings of the Holy Spirit in the Catholic Church. Hence belief in the Catholic Church is involved in the attitude of faith. It is an attitude which involves the expression "I believe in . . . the Catholic Church." So the simplest of those Acts of Faith by which the Church teaches her children to exercise and strengthen their faith is, "My God, I believe in Thee and all Thy Church doth teach, because Thou hast said it and Thy word is true."

What then is to be said about those who, through no fault of their own, have been wrongly taught, or not taught at all, the truths of the Christian religion? Can we say that faith is possessed only by that small body of Christians in England who

have been taught and have received the Catholic religion ?

This certainly we can say. God will never condemn any man for an ignorance which is not his own fault. Moreover, it is quite possible for a Christian to have at the same time great faith and much ignorance of the true faith. For what characterises faith is not so much an explicit knowledge of the truth as an implicit acceptance of it. If, for instance, a man can say wholeheartedly, " My God, I believe in Thee and all Thy Church doth teach," he may have at the same time an ignorance or even a misconception as to what the Church does teach on this or that point. And, so long as there is no *culpable* ignorance or wrong belief, his spiritual development will not be hindered. Where he is wrong, he is wrong in good faith. He has only to be taught

clearly what the truth is to accept it at once, because he has the implicit faith which is required. Most of us know of cases where there has not even been a right belief in the Catholic Church, the persons concerned having been untaught, or wrongly taught, the meaning of the term: but there was an implicit faith in our Lord which led them to accept unhesitatingly the truth about His Church when it was put before them.

We should therefore examine ourselves often as to our possession of this implicit faith. Are we willing to believe *all* that God reveals: truths which as yet we may not know, and which it may humble us to accept? For faith is often sharply tested by the requirement it lays upon us to surrender freely opinions which we have cherished under the

impression that they were truths of religion. And every priest will know of instances of persons who made some spiritual progress while in ignorance of the whole Catholic Faith, but whose advance was startlingly arrested by their refusal to accept some unwelcome truth, when God gave them not only the opportunity of learning it, but grace to accept it.

And, once having this implicit faith, it becomes, of course, a duty to learn, in every way possible, the truths of our holy religion, confident that each addition to our explicit knowledge of the faith we have implicitly accepted will mean more light, more knowledge of God, "in the knowledge of Whom standeth our eternal life." We shall seek to learn from those who are set to instruct us, and, where we can, by the study of reliable books on the

faith. Above all other reading we shall set the reading of those Holy Scriptures which are given us to nourish and strengthen our faith. And while we thus widen and deepen our knowledge of the truth, it will be with constantly repeated acts of faith, by which we mortify all pride of intellect and profess our belief, not in our own powers, nor in the wisdom of man, but in the truth of God, Who reveals Himself in the Church of Christ, assured that so far as we are conforming our minds to that of the Spirit-guided Church, and so far only, shall we be able to say with the Apostle, "We have the mind of Christ."

The need for careful self-examination as to whole-hearted acceptance of the faith is not confined to those whose knowledge of religion is im-

perfect. There is a startling warning in the Epistle to the Hebrews which the most orthodox cannot afford to pass lightly over. It is the injunction, to those who had learned their religion from the first teachers, to "look diligently, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." [1] Not only is it easily possible for those who have received the faith to lose their hold on it. It is possible to have a lurking unbelief in some truth of religion, and to be unaware of it. This secret unbelief becomes a "root of bitterness" [2] in the life, checking spiritual development, until by diligent self-examination the failure is traced to its source. A secret disbelief, for instance, in the holiness of God may lie at the root of a slothfulness which infects all religious

[1] Heb. iii. 12. [2] Heb. xii. 15.

duties. A secret disbelief in His Loving Providence lies behind a great deal of discontent. Many more instances might be given: but these may suffice to shew the importance of a constant and careful obedience to the command, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith."[1] Such self-examination will be followed by particular acts of faith in the truths which have been so inadequately grasped: there is no other remedy than to set the soul in the light which has escaped it. To lose our hold, to however small a degree, on any revealed truth, is inevitably in the same degree to "depart from the living God."[2] Without faith, there is no coming to God: by faith we draw near to Him who is our life.[3] The diminishing of faith necessarily spells loss in the spiritual life.

[1] 2 Cor. xiii. 5. [2] Heb. iii. 12. [3] Heb. xi. 6.

Of all the truths which Christian experience has tested and can reaffirm, there is none more certain than that at which modern undenominationalism so blindly stumbles, the truth that "Whosoever will be saved, *before all things* it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith."

Something must be said about the connection, which is necessary and intimate, between faith and worship. This connection is emphasised by the Athanasian Creed with its declaration "the Catholic Faith is this, that we *worship* One God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity." And holy Scripture throughout emphasises the same truth. The Bible is indeed a history of the true faith expressing itself in true worship, and constantly menaced by a lack of true faith, exhibiting itself in the forsaking of true worship and the substitution

of idolatry. In our days religion is too commonly conceived of as a force more or less independent of outward worship. Yet all religious experience enforces the truth that the neglect of worship imperils faith. The decay of faith and of worship, and the revival of both, have gone hand in hand. The central service of Christian worship, the Mass, is an epitome of the Gospel, setting its main facts before man, and providing him with his chief opportunity of confessing before God and man his faith. Every Mass rightly attended is a coming into the light of God's sanctuary: the experience of the psalmist, who was perplexed with life's problems until he came into the sanctuary of God, but who then "understood," is constantly repeated. God's light and truth lead us to the altar, and at

the altar illuminate our souls. Difficulties that will yield to no argument, however cogent, disappear marvelously in the Presence of our Lord vouchsafed in the Mass. A faith which fails to lead men round about the altars of the living God, there to worship Him in spirit and truth, is defective and precarious. The many martyrs who died because they continued to go to Mass when the habit exposed them to the danger of detection by the enemies of the faith, and thus to torture and death, understood this. To neglect the Christian worship was, in their eyes, to fail to confess Christ before men, to deny the faith which prompted worship as a primary duty.

The Church insists on our attendance at Mass, unless hindered by grave cause, on all Sundays and those great festivals which she distinguishes

as days of obligation. Besides insisting on this minimum she encourages her children to attend on festivals of devotion. But the devout Christian, who seeks to grow in faith and the knowledge of God, will not be satisfied with a minimum, or even with occasional attendance on week-day festivals. Realising that faith grows in the sanctuary as plants flourish in the sunshine, he will count it a privilege as well as a duty to come to Mass as often as he can. There he will find his faith, too ready to languish in the atmosphere of the world, reinvigorated by the forces of the sanctuary, and God the God of his joy and gladness.

CHAPTER III

HOPE AND GOOD RESOLUTIONS

THE virtue of Hope needs especial emphasis in its bearing on the Christian life. For Protestantism has practically eliminated it from consideration. To the Protestant "faith" is all-important. But "faith," as he understands it, is not so much the belief in a definite revelation as the assurance of personal salvation. And it is this perverted view of faith that has led to undenominationalism as the prevalent substitute for the older dogmatic Protestantism. Once believe that our Lord died for you, and that, therefore, you are saved, and all is well with you. This is the message of latter-day subjective

Protestantism. Obviously it is only a step from this to say, "it matters nothing at all what you believe, so long as you hold that the Lord Jesus has saved you by His Death." And equally obviously, if such assurance of personal salvation be the great object of religion, Hope is eliminated. We can no longer be said to hope for Heaven, if we are certain of it. In strict logical sequence with the doctrine of assurance, the whole conception of Christian life as one of effort, of pressing forward to a goal, the attainment of which calls for striving and perseverance, disappears. The hope for heaven acts as a spur, leading men to take the steps which will lead them there, and to take them with energy and perseverance, to give themselves to prayer and fasting and good works. The assurance of heaven induces,

on the other hand, a contented acquiescence in the condition which allows of it, and has led in many cases quite naturally to the repudiation of all necessity for self-abnegation or for insistence on good works. It is at the root of that self-complacency which is characteristic of Protestantism in all its forms. Let us then be quite clear as to the meaning of Hope and its function in the Christian life.

Hope is the virtue by which we set our wills on Heaven. God, we know, wills that we should be saved. If our salvation depended only on His Will, we should be certain of it. But He has willed that it should depend on our free choice. We shall not be saved unless we will it. And to will our salvation is, it need hardly be said, something more than to desire it. It is the setting our wills in motion towards God. And this

not only as their ultimate aim, but immediately. Energised by supernatural grace, the will is set on the attainment, ultimately, of final salvation, and immediately on those activities which conduce to it, the constant efforts against the stream of a fallen world and a corrupt human nature which alone can secure ultimate triumph.

Hence, in a sense, hope is primary. The Athanasian symbol, with all its insistence on the necessity of a right faith, starts with the necessity of a right will, "Whosoever *will* be saved." For faith itself depends on the will to believe what God has revealed. So, too, St. John Damascene wrote, in the hymn which Dr. Neale's translation has made familiar :

> Those eternal bowers
> Man hath never trod,
> Those unfading flowers
> Round the throne of God ;

Who may hope to gain them
After weary fight?
Who at length attain them
Clad in robes of white?

He who gladly barters
All on earthly ground;
He who, like the martyrs,
Says, "I *will* be crowned."

To set our wills on salvation: to subordinate all else to this, the one thing that matters: to persevere in choosing the path that leads home, and to turn away resolutely from all that hinders salvation: this is indeed our primary need. We need, in a word, to lay hold firmly on the Christian hope, to cling to it tenaciously, to exercise it strenuously. So we pray for the newly baptised Christian that he may go on "joyful through hope." To let our hope weaken is inevitably to let our energies flag. Renewed hope is the secret of renewed activity. It is hope which gives buoyancy to the pilgrim's

footsteps as he presses on towards heaven.

The faculty of hope, given us by the grace of God, as part of our baptismal endowment, requires to be constantly exercised by *Acts of Hope*. The short Act of Hope, "My God, I hope in Thee for grace and for glory, because of Thy promises, Thy mercy and Thy power," should, of course, be familiar to all Catholics. We do well to use it often, and so to impress upon our souls the ultimate object of all our strivings and the ground on which they rest of the faithfulness of God, Who will never forsake those who seek Him.

All our religious exercises, so far as they are performed with a view to serving God and winning heaven, are, of course, acts of hope. Every good prayer we say, every good work we perform, is a step forward in the

energies of hope, and an active exercise of them. Our confessions, by which we throw off the burden which holds us back, strengthen the hope in which we go forward. For "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself."[1] Our communions, by which we seek the strength we need that we may go along the hard road through the wilderness to God, and our worship at the Altar, by which we anticipate the joys of our companionship in adoration with the company of heaven, exercise and feed our hope. Confirmation, with its central gift of ghostly strength, enabling the will to persevere in the service which is a continual conflict, is peculiarly the sacrament of Christian hope.

But there is one practice in particular indispensable to the exercise of hope

[1] S. John. iii. 3.

and the strengthening of the will in the service of God to which we may well devote especial attention, not only on account of its intrinsic importance, but because of the common neglect to give it due consideration. We refer to the making and keeping of what are called good resolutions.

It has been said that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions." The meaning and truth of the saying are obvious. The worst of sinners have enough of goodness in them to mean well. But owing to the weakness of the human will, good intentions often remain vague intentions, never translated into action. What we need to insist upon is the complementary truth that the road to heaven is paved with good resolutions faithfully performed. How important such resolutions are may be

seen if we reflect on the fact that every conscious movement towards God involves a good resolution behind it, whether explicitly expressed or merely formed in the will. For it is clear that no one really prays, makes a good confession or communion, or performs any good action, without resolving to do so. Those good resolutions, therefore, which we are taught to make at our meditations, or after confession or communion, are of the utmost importance. Such resolutions, rightly made and duly per formed, strengthen the will, reinforce hope, and cannot fail to lead on to that attainment of everlasting salvation at which they aim.

It is very important to insist on this. For it does sometimes happen that Christians, discouraged by failure to keep good resolutions, give up the practice of making them. This

is a fatal mistake. The weaker the will, the greater the need for its strengthening by exercise.

To abandon good resolutions is suicide of the will; its surrender to the weakness which is meant to be remedied by the activities of the will informed by grace.

We may take it as an axiom, then, that we must persevere in the practice of making good resolutions. But what are we to say to those whose difficulty is their failure to keep such resolutions? Obviously it is the keeping of them which matters most. Good resolutions which are not kept bear a suspicious resemblance to those "good intentions" which pave the road to hell.

The first thing to be said is that no one is so weak as not to be able to keep good resolutions, provided they are easy to be carried out.

Probably there are few of us who could keep any resolution we made, however difficult its performance. Too often, in making resolutions, people fail to allow sufficiently for their own weakness. In the fervour of prayer they are ashamed at their neglect of some practice which they recognise to be right and good, and they resolve to undertake it, without considering whether it is not too difficult for them. We must beware of failing to recognise the importance of making easy resolutions. We should not conclude that, because a thing is easy to do, it is on that account not worth while to make it the subject of a resolution. If our strength will not allow us to take great strides, we waste effort by attempting them in vain, while quite small steps, well within our power, would be getting us forward, and

developing our strength for greater advances. In forming our resolutions we need humility as well as courage. What passes for courage is sometimes a form of pride and is inevitably succeeded by failure.

Three maxims may well be borne in mind about our good resolutions. The first is to choose them wisely; the second to form them strongly; the third to perform them faithfully.

Before making a good resolution we should pray for guidance, invoking the Holy Spirit of Counsel by whose aid alone we can resolve aright. Then we should choose our resolution with a view not only to our needs, but to our powers, remembering humbly our weakness and realising the importance to us of quite little things.

Then the resolution must be strongly formed by a real exercise of the will.

We all know how, in the daily choices of life, the keeping of a resolution depends largely on the strength with which it is made. We may make a resolution, of sorts, to get up at a certain time in the morning, and break it over and over again. But some important arrangement depending upon our being up, the catching of a train, or the keeping of an engagement, will lead to the formation of a strong resolution which we are certain to keep. Our religious activities are too often effortless; and the failure to make an effort of the will in strong resolutions is the secret of many broken resolutions.

Lastly, we must make a point of insisting to ourselves on faithfulness in keeping our resolutions. "Promise unto the Lord your God and keep it." The matter of the resolution may be in itself small; the keeping of

any resolution made to God cannot be a small thing. It was St. Gregory who wrote: "A little thing is a little thing; but faithfulness in little things is a very great thing."

CHAPTER IV

PRESUMPTION AND DESPAIR

WE have seen that the practice of the virtue of Hope is of primary importance. We shall be saved, if we will be saved. And this will-to-be-saved which, by laying hold firmly and perseveringly on the means of salvation, actually secures the end at which it aims, depends entirely on the supernatural virtue of Hope, implanted in the soul and kept alive by the grace of God. Hence the practical importance of knowledge on the subject of this virtue. Nor is it enough to know in what Hope consists and how it is exercised. It is important that we should know also something of the dangers which beset its exercise.

The Christian life is throughout a struggle between nature and grace: between the "old Adam," our human nature wounded by the fall, and the new life imparted to it by union with the second Adam. It is easier to believe what is false than what is true, easier to set our wills on transitory ends than on the eternal reward, easier to love creatures than the Creator. Grace alone makes possible what would be impossible to human nature, enabling us by Faith, Hope and Charity to know Him that is true, to serve Him Whose service is freedom, and to love Him Who is alone worthy of being loved for Himself. And in this struggle between grace and nature it is the will which is the determining factor. So that the enslavement of the will is the great object of the enemy of souls. His energies are, therefore,

directed largely against the virtue of Hope. He menaces it by the two opposite dangers of *presumption* and *despair*. Opposite as these dangers are, it does not follow that they are confined to different persons. Nor are they to be looked for only in extreme forms. Presumption in insidious forms may be a danger to quite devout persons, while the spiritual despondency which is a milder form of despair is an ever-present danger to those who are really trying to serve God.

Presumption may be called the caricature of hope. It is a false confidence by which the soul deceives itself, assuming that all is well with its progress, when it has no right to make such an assumption. It is peculiarly the danger of those who hold false or heretical views on religious subjects. The Protestant

doctrine of assurance, as we have already seen, favours it. And the havoc of Protestantism may be best estimated from the number of persons who, while neglecting utterly the means of grace and conspicuously failing in the most elementary Christian virtues, are yet perfectly self-satisfied, presuming that because they do not convict themselves of sin the justice of God will find no fault with them. They trust, they say, in the goodness of God. But they deny by their assumptions the character of God as He has revealed it. The wrath of God has no terrors for them, because either they do not believe in it, or they refuse to see in themselves any ground for it. Such people will actually die with no profession of repentance on their lips, no fear of a judgment to come. Every priest will know how terribly

common at death-beds is this insensibility. And it is impossible not to connect the prevalence of this kind of presumption with the prevalence of undenominationalism. Once substitute for the idea of one religion, the one Gospel of the One God revealed to man to be accepted "unto salvation" or rejected at his peril, the idea that there are varying forms of Christianity, from which a man may make his choice, believing what he will, and inevitably you substitute for the worship of the One God the worship of "other gods." Men worship an abstraction, the creature of their own minds, who will act, not according to revelation, but as seems reasonable to those who have invented him. The Christian hope is inseparable from the Christian faith. It is based on the character and revelation of God;

tamper with these, and Hope is at once undermined.

We must not, however, suppose that all those who hold the faith are free from this danger. Those whose orthodoxy is beyond suspicion may yet be guilty of presumption. Easy acquiescence in a low standard, the satisfaction with a certain regularity of religious observance, the failure to aim wholeheartedly at that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"[1]—all these are evidences of a presumption which dares to hope for salvation without attempting to comply with the conditions God has imposed for its attainment. Not one of us can really afford to neglect careful self-examination on this matter. For presumption may easily lurk unsuspected in the soul, betraying itself only by quite small

[1] Heb. xii. 14.

signs, a slovenliness about prayer, an easiness in letting ourselves off duties or devotions, the unhappy tendency, too common among Catholics, to minimise obligations, the tendency, again, to be offhand in our treatment of God, to take liberties, as it were, with Him.

The remedies for this danger of presumption may be briefly mentioned. Summed up in a phrase they come to this, that we need to cultivate, by every possible means, holy fear. "Happy is the man that feareth alway; but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief."[1] We need to meditate often upon the horror of sin, the wrath of God, the strictness of His judgment, especially with those to whom He has given much. The fact that the Church is constantly leading her children to dwell on

[1] Prov. xxviii. 14.

these subjects and devotes two seasons, Advent and Lent, to their consideration, may be taken as clear evidence of the common danger of presumption, the common need of watchfulness against it. The neglect to make a proper use of these special seasons is in itself a sign of a presumption which ventures to discard what the common experience of Christians has found a needed help.

While presumption caricatures hope, despair contradicts it. Of this despair in its extreme form, as the utter abandonment of all hope of heaven, we shall have little to say here. Not because it is uncommon. This is far from being the case. It is probably not so commonly found as presumption: unless, indeed, we are to reckon as despair the absence of all hope of heaven, such as is common among those who live in entire

neglect of God and religion; who say "in their heart," if not with their lips, "There is no God." But this absence of hope is hardly to be described as despair, any more than an utter ignorance of God can be called unbelief. Despair rather implies the loss of a hope once cherished. Judas, rather than Gallio, exemplifies it. In many cases it is the nemesis of presumption. The man who has habitually deceived himself into a hope that the goodness of God will pass over his sins and accept his low standard is undeceived at the last and passes rapidly from presumption to despair. It is a frequent consequence of sins of the flesh, and perhaps the greatest obstacle to repentance and amendment in the case of those who have yielded to them. And certain forms of heresy, notably those which rely on emotion-

alism, as, for example, the religion of the Salvation Army, promote the yielding after a period to depths of despair. It is easy to see how this happens. An emotional crisis is hailed as conversion, and followed by the experience of lively emotions at all religious exercises, especially in an exciting environment. But the emotions refuse after a time to respond to a stimulus which has become familiar, and the presumption which relied on "feelings" passes into a despair which assumes that God has forsaken the soul since it no longer experiences them.

What is more important, however, for us to consider is that lesser form of despair which we may call spiritual despondency. This is not so much the abandonment of hope as the weakening of it. It is terribly common: few are spared from the

temptation to yield to it. And it is full of danger. For the weakening of hope means inevitably the slackening of effort. And we need persevering effort if we are to work out our salvation. Life is a pilgrimage: and we cannot afford to indulge in a despondency which leads us to sit down by the roadside and pity ourselves, when we need to be pressing forward to the goal. Life is a battle: and we cannot afford to allow a despondency which makes us half-hearted in our warfare against the foes that beset us.

A great deal of spiritual despondency is due, as we shall show, to lack of knowledge of a certain kind. This knowledge is simple and easily acquired: and any treatment of despondency, however elementary, must necessarily deal with it.

The temptation to despondency

almost invariably arises from certain feelings: or, perhaps it would be truer to say, the absence of certain feelings. A common feature of the spiritual life is the withdrawal from the soul of certain religious emotions, *e.g.*, of joy in religion, realisation of the nearness of God and the reality of the sacraments. With the loss of these emotions, there invades the soul a feeling of sadness and desolation. This condition, while it must be clearly distinguished from spiritual despondency, may be called depression. Almost every servant of God knows what it is to endure this desolation, or depression of spirit. The psalms, with their reflection of every mood of the soul, are full of its expressions. The complaint, Why go I so heavily ? [1] occurs in various forms.

[1] Ps. xliii. 2, 5; *cp.* xxxv. 14, xxxviii. 6, xlii. 6, 11.

Who does not know what it is to feel at prayer as if he prayed out of a heart of stone into a heaven of brass: to experience at the altar no sense of the Presence which at other times seemed almost palpable; to feel as cold after absolution as before it? All this is depression. But it is not spiritual despondency. Despondency may, and very often does, follow from this condition of the feelings, as sin often follows temptation. But temptation is not sin. And desolation in the soul is not spiritual despondency. Our feelings are not entirely subject to our control: the will, which is not concerned in producing them, need not be affected by them: and hope need not suffer. But this truth is not always sufficiently realised. If every Christian would engrave on his mind the certain truth that what God asks of us is

not feelings but faithfulness, spiritual desolation would be robbed of most of its dangers. And this is the first piece of knowledge on the importance of which we must insist.

Let it be said then, quite plainly, that prayers which are a delight to us, the prayers which flow out so easily from a heart which feels full of love and gratitude and joy in God, are not necessarily more pleasing to God than prayers which we say when all prayer is an effort, when God seems far off and the heart utterly cold. Sacraments are not more valuable when we feel an influx of joy in the receiving of them, than when the preparation for them seems a weariness and the reception of them utterly unsatisfying. Indeed, the exact contrary is often the case. When prayer is easy and delightful, we are only too likely to

pray rather from love of self, for the joy we get from prayer, than from love of God. To pray at the cost of effort; to persevere in using the sacraments when we feel no joy in them, is to do for supernatural motives what no natural feelings urge or help us to do, and may well be more pleasing to God than a devotion, charged with feeling, which costs no effort. Our religion is most profitable when it has most of the cross in it. The absence of consoling feelings does not impair its value. It is only when, owing to the absence of these feelings, we yield to self-pity and despondency, and slacken our efforts, because the way is hard and the sun no longer shines on us, excusing ourselves from bearing our cross: then hope is weakened and the soul begins to be in danger of loss.

To lay hold on the truth that feelings, or spiritual consolations, are no certain index to the value of religious exercises is in itself a valuable antidote to the temptation to despondency. But we need to advance from this to a further truth. We may lay down, as a certain law of the spiritual life, that desolation, far from being a sign of failure, is commonly, although not necessarily, an actual sign of progress: and that advance in the spiritual life is at certain stages invariably preceded by the withdrawal of consolations.

Spiritual writers insist with one voice on this law. They tell us that, after conversion, God commonly bestows upon the soul an abundance of spiritual consolations. His service becomes a joy, prayer is comparatively easy, the soul seems to move in a region flooded with

light and joy. This state of things is not, as might be supposed, a reward to the soul for its choice of God, so much as an inducement given to it by the goodness of God, while it is still weak and in need of such inducements, to allure it along the road of virtue. And it lasts only for a time: for such time as God sees the soul to need it. The time comes, sooner or later, when God withdraws these consolations in order that the soul may fall back on more purely supernatural motives and principles, that it may be strengthened by encountering more opposition from nature, that it may profit by the bearing of a cross, felt to be a burden, yet never beyond its strength to bear. The period of darkness and difficulty, following on that of light and joy, may be a severe trial. But, like the period which preceded it, it has its appointed

limit. It may last a short time or a long time, as God sees to be best for the soul. It may be lightened, now and again, by fleeting moments of spiritual consolation. Sooner or later the darkness is certain to lift. "Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." [1] Throughout, hope must cling to the faithfulness of God, refusing to be unduly elated by consolations, or unduly cast down by their withdrawal, holding fast to the certain truth that God knows what is best for the soul and will deal with it according to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses.

In souls far advanced in holiness, the visitation of great interior trials, with dryness and desolation, is a great sign of God's favour. For while spiritual desolation may recur frequently in the progress of the soul

[1] Ps. xxx. 5; *cp.* cxxvi. 6.

along the Purgative Way, in which God is freeing it from the domination of the passions, and in the Illuminative Way, in which He grants it an increased knowledge of Himself and a growth in positive virtue, it is certain that the entrance to the highest stage, the Unitive Way, in which God admits the soul to a special intimacy of union with Himself, is always preceded by a period of acute desolation, the "dark night of the soul."

Our heavinesses and sadnesses are little trials, compared with the interior crosses of the great saints: as theirs were light compared with the darkness which fell upon the human Soul of Jesus in the Garden and deepened in intensity until it wrung from Him the cry on the Cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"[1]

[1] St. Matt. xxvi. 37, 38; xxvii. 46.

For our crosses, whether interior or exterior, are proportioned by an unerring wisdom to our strength to bear them; and what has strengthened and perfected heroic sanctity would break us down. The virtue of hope need suffer from no trials which God permits the soul to bear. All we have to do is to go on cheerfully and readily, bearing the cross and holding fast our confidence in Him Who wills our salvation and is about our path in all His Wisdom and Power and Love, sustaining us in all difficulties and enabling us to triumph over all obstacles.

. One piece of counsel, of great practical value, may be given in conclusion. And that is that we should be especially on our guard against self-pity. This insidious form of self-love is very common and may easily be very disastrous in its effects.

Those who yield to it are often not aware of their enemy. We should examine ourselves frequently and mortify vigorously any tendency to this failing. Self-pity is a form of ingratitude. And in times of desolation we should aim especially at the cultivation of gratitude to God: for we especially need then to rest on the thought of His goodness to us. It was the goodness of God that gave us the joys we have known: we have never deserved them. And it is His goodness which withdraws them, for our good, when we lose them. To dwell on His past mercies, to say with the Psalmist, "I will remember Thee concerning the land of Jordan and the little hill of Hermon,"[1] is to exorcise the spirit of a morbid and unwholesome self-pity. We need the rod of God, as well as His staff to

[1] Ps. xlii. 8; *cp.* lxxvii. 11.

comfort us, vinegar as well as oil for the healing of our wounds. The darkness of the night need not make us afraid: night and day alike have their place in the ordering of His Providence.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me." [1]

[1] Ps. xxiii. 4.

CHAPTER V

CHARITY, AND THE SPIRIT OF DEVOTION

BY Faith we are enabled to know God with the certain knowledge which comes from the apprehension of revealed truth. By Hope we are enabled to serve Him, subordinating our wills to His and laying hold of the salvation which He wills for us. And by Charity we are enabled to love God, and our neighbour for His sake. This saving knowledge, this emancipating service and this heavenly love are all alike impossible to human nature unaided by grace. All alike are imparted in germ, as it were, in Baptism. By the exercise of them in the Christian life, an exercise throughout dependent

on grace, we are enabled to go on our way to heaven, "stedfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity," steadied by the firm convictions which faith supplies, impelled by the eager resolutions which hope inspires, sustained throughout by the ardent affections of charity.

Charity is extolled in Holy Scripture [1] as the highest of the theological virtues. While faith and hope belong to a passing order, and will give place hereafter to the Vision and Fruition of God to which they lead, charity, the crown of the virtues, "abideth": only being deepened in intensity by the vision and possession of its Object. And it must be remembered that faith and hope both alike depend on charity: all three virtues being indeed, as we have already insisted, mutually interdependent. Charity

[1] Cor. xiii.

would be impossible without faith: for we cannot love God without some knowledge of Him. But faith in its turn depends for its growth upon charity: we cannot advance in the knowledge of God without cultivating the love of Him. And the Christian hope could scarcely be intelligible without the love of God informing it and inflaming its desire to attain to Him. Hence the appropriateness of the phrase "rooted in charity," in the Prayer Book. Charity is a radical energy of the Christian life. If it is true that God is Light and Truth, and desires that we should know Him; that He is the Supreme End of His creatures and wills we should reach out to Him and hereafter enjoy Him; it is above all true that God is Love and that He desires to be loved. All advance in the spiritual life involves necessarily a

growth in charity. And the greatest obstacle to advance is an unloving service of God, into which it is only too easy to fall.

The cultivation, therefore, of the energies of charity is of the most vital importance: and some knowledge on this point cannot fail to be of the greatest practical value. For in truth the Christian life does not consist so much in doing this thing or that, but in doing all we do in a spirit of tender love for God.

Two of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, Piety and Holy Fear, are especially concerned with the affections, directing them in the exercise of charity.

The word "piety" scarcely does justice to the Latin *pietas*, which it translates. *Pietas* expresses the quality of a dutiful affection towards those who by any relationship have

a claim on such affection. As a religious term it denotes the attitude of filial love for God, as Creator and Father, while holy fear, distinguished from that other fear spoken of in Holy Scripture, which is "cast out" by "perfect love,"[1] denotes the attitude of loving reverence which befits the creature in its dealings with an all-holy Creator. It is sometimes called "filial fear," as distinguished from the "servile fear" to which we have alluded. We have already spoken of the importance of cultivating this holy fear, as a safeguard against the danger of presumption. Presumption may lurk hidden in much that passes for Christian piety. While Holy Fear guards the affections from this danger, informing and balancing all our devotion with a reverential awe of God, Piety

[1] St. John iv. 5.

leads the soul into a tender and loving intimacy, inspiring it with a true devotion.

It is of this devotion, as exercised in prayer and action, that we desire to treat in the remainder of this chapter, and in the next.

Charity, as exercised in our prayers, leads us to lay a needed stress on what is called *affective prayer*, those acts of the affections of which the commonly used Act of Charity, "My God, I love Thee with all my heart, because Thou art so good, and for Thy sake I love my neighbour as myself," is the simplest type. Very commonly the prayers of Christians are lacking in this affective element, and the unloving prayers and lives of many religious persons are to be traced to this lack. A glance at the psalms will show how prominent a place affective prayer occupies in

them. The soul that desires to love God must give itself often to this loving converse with Him, in which it tells Him again and again of its love for Him. People are sometimes hindered from the use of this kind of prayer by a fear of unreality. They will avoid using acts of the affections which they find in books of devotion, because, they say, these expressions do not answer to any feelings in their own hearts. Their prayers, they consider, should give expression to their feelings, and not outrun them. Here, again, we find that deference to "feelings" which, as we have already shown, constitutes so real a danger to English religion. If we might never use prayers which outran our own feelings of devotion, we should be cut off from the use of a very large part of the psalter. The real truth is that our prayers should

reflect rather what we desire to feel, than our actual feelings. If we are conscious that our affections towards God are lacking in depth and intensity, we shall surely desire to mend this fault. And this we shall never do by refraining from the language of love. The safe rule is to use such language as heartily as we can: not to refrain from it because our hearts correspond so ill with it.

To all those, then, who need, as who does not? to grow in love of God, we give this first recommendation, to practise assiduously affective prayer. Without this affective prayer little advance is possible in the spirit of devotion or in the ways of prayer.

In this connection something must be said of what are called the "devotions," or those specialised exercises of devotion in which it occupies

itself with particular subjects. The Christian devotions are many in number, and treatises have been written on them. Here we propose only to glance briefly at four of them. These are the Devotion to our Lady, the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, the Devotion to the Passion and the Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

The order in which these devotions are mentioned is not, we need hardly say, that of their importance. Devotion to our Lord, in any form, could not of course be put second to devotion to His blessed Mother. But the order has a logical sequence which may profitably be noticed.

For those who desire to grow in charity, devotion to our Lady is in a very real sense primary. For true religion consists above all else in a right personal relation to our Lord and to the Father in Him. And of

this right relationship to God Incarnate we have one supreme example, that of our blessed Lady. If it be true, as it certainly is true, that Jesus is the Way to the Father, it is also true that Mary is the first and greatest of those who have gone home by that Way. In her we find the supreme example of the faith in Jesus Christ by which alone we can know God: so that it is written of her, "Blessed is she that believed."[1] If we desire an example of the hope which is never cast down but clings with unabated confidence to the Saviour in the hours of deepest darkness, to whom else shall we look than to the sorrowful Mother, standing faithful at the Cross? And when our love and devotion need kindling, again it is the thought of Mary, rejoicing in God her Saviour,[2]

[1] St. Luke i. 45. [2] St. Luke i. 47.

worshipping Him at Bethlehem and Nazareth, cleaving to Him in love, and desiring nothing so much as that men should love Him and do His will, that will help us.

It is a common mistake of Anglicanism, even when it values devotion to our Lady, to think of it rather as an ornament to religion than as in any sense essential: to lead up to it, rather than to start from it. The real truth is that such a devotion is fundamental in the sense of being bound up with a true and loving apprehension of the truth of the Incarnation. And it is primary among the Christian devotions, in the sense that it enables us to enter into them as we could not without it. A little reflection will show the truth of this. Devotion to the Sacred Heart, in itself obviously more important than devotion to Mary, can

be learned from her, as it cannot be learned by those who hold aloof from her. For no one ever penetrated into the depths of that Heart as she did. Our love of Jesus will be deeper and truer for being a conscious imitation of her who loved Him above all others. Similarly with devotion to the Sacred Passion. If we seek to "suffer with Christ,"[1] her compassion is an example which we cannot afford to pass over. And we may note that one of the most tender exhortations to such devotion, a hymn popular among us, but too often altered in deference to Protestant prejudice, begins with an expression of devotion to our Lady.

O come and mourn with me awhile:
See, Mary calls us to her side.

So again with devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. This devotion

[1] Rom. viii. 17.

is at its best when it is consciously modelled on the devotion which Mary showed to the Sacred Humanity from the Crib to the Sepulchre. And it is a true Christian instinct which reminds us of her in such Eucharistic hymns as—

> Had true Body, born of Mary,
> Spotless Virgin's virgin birth.

A true devotion to the Mother of God may fairly therefore be considered primary for those who seek to grow in that spirit of tender reverence, so prominent in her, which is of the essence of devotion and promotes accordingly the growth of Charity. We use the phrase "a true devotion" advisedly. Needless to say, those who seek to develop their interior life will be on their guard against exaggerations which lose sight of the proportion of faith. Every instructed Christian knows that an abyss separ-

ates even the highest of creatures from the Creator, and that we may not accord to Mary such homage as can rightly be given to God alone. The danger of a false devotion to Mary is not a common one in England, where the opposite error of failing to accord to her that love and veneration which are her due is so sadly prevalent. And where it does exist, it is to be found rather among those whose religion is of a shallow and external type than among those who cultivate the energies of the interior life.

Similarly, we place devotion to the Sacred Heart second, not because the devotion to the Passion, the devotion *par excellence* of the saints, is inferior to it, but rather because a devotion to the Sacred Heart must be presupposed in any devotion to the Passion which penetrates below

the surface of our Lord's bodily sufferings to the agony of His Heart, torn by love and sorrow; while the mystery of the Blessed Sacrament, again, can only be adequately grasped in the light of the love of that Sacred Heart which has given it to us, and expresses itself daily in it.

Here, again, it is necessary to guard against misconception. By devotion to the Sacred Heart we do not mean a barren worship of an organ of the Sacred Humanity, considered apart—if this were possible—from the Person to Whom it belongs. A universal convention of human speech and thought treats the heart as the symbol of the affections, and only perversity can quarrel with the use of this convention in our religion. Our Lord Himself authorises it in the words of His

invitation, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart."[1] And indeed it is difficult to use the language of love in our religion without falling into precisely those modes of thought and speech which constitute devotion to the Sacred Heart. The restrained piety of the most popular English hymnbook gives us such expressions as :

> Jesu, grant me this, I pray,
> Ever in Thy Heart to stay.

or again—

> Hide us in Thy dear Heart.

Those who can use such language as this can have no just cause for cavilling at a devotion the whole object of which is to exhibit the Heart of Jesus as the refuge of sinners and the school of saints.

In truth, such devotion is most necessary for those who seek to

[1] St. Matt. xi. 29.

advance in the interior life. The inspiration of all Christian living for all time is the Life lived among men by the Incarnate Word, and exhibited for us in the Gospels. This Life we shall never understand aright, unless we learn to see in its exterior activities the outward expression of the love of God and man, burning in the Heart of Jesus, dictating and informing His words and works.

The crucifix has been the book of all the saints, and no true interior life is possible without devotion to the sacred Passion. The charity which we seek to develop in our own cold hearts is the response to that great love wherewith God has loved us. And the Passion is the supreme expression of that love. Only by seeking to plumb the depths of the Passion can we measure the depths of Divine Love. "God so loved

the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son"[1] to die for us. To quote again the language of popular devotion:

> Inscribed upon the Cross we see
> In shining letters, God is Love.

And it is easy to see that this devotion is logically prior to the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, which is "the memorial of His Passion."

On the importance of this last devotion for reinforcing the energies of charity it should hardly be necessary to insist. The holy Eucharist is, in a sense, the extension of the Sacrifice of Calvary, as well as the fruit of it. As our Prayer Book has it, God has shown His love for us "for that He hath given His Son, not only to die for us, but to be our spiritual food and sustenance in that

[1] St. John iii. 16.

holy sacrament."[1] And the history of the Church, particularly in this country, warrants the conclusion that spiritual religion is intimately and necessarily bound up with devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Christian devotion has ebbed to its lowest when the holy Eucharist has been held in least regard: the revival of religion has gone hand in hand with a revival of devotion to the Sacrament of the Altar.

The devotions are expressions of that spirit of Christian devotion which we need to cultivate. They presuppose its existence. But, in their turn, they feed and reinforce the devotion which they express. And on this account they claim the attention of all those who seek to grow in charity and in the spirit of devotion which belongs to it.

[1] Long Exhortation in Communion Service.

CHAPTER VI

GOOD WORKS AND MORTIFICATION

"IF ye love Me," says our Saviour, "keep My commandments." [1]

Charity is exercised not only by the interior activities of affective prayer, expressing themselves in the language of devotion, but also, necessarily, by the outward activities of a life of love for God and man. Charity involves the performance of what are called "good works," and grows by them.

What do we mean by "good works?" It is important to ask this question. For the world, as it has appropriated the word "charity,"

[1] St. John xiv. 15; *cp.* 2 St. John 6.

and made it mean very much less than it should, recognises also good works. But what the world means by "good works" is something other than the meaning of the phrase as used in the language of Christianity, as, for instance, when we pray "that we, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of Thee be plenteously rewarded." Everybody knows what the world means by a good work. Anything which benefits our fellow-creatures in the eyes of men is so called. To build a hospital, or to support it, to relieve poverty or distress in any form, to exercise human benevolence in any shape, all these are in a sense good actions: and the Church classifies them as the works of mercy, extending them to cover spiritual works of mercy, such as help men's souls, in addition to the temporal

works of mercy on which the world sets more store.

But by "good works" the Church means something other than actions which benefit humanity. She uses the term to cover all actions which please God and merit the reward which His justice and love will bestow for them. To constitute a good work, three conditions must be fulfilled. And it will be seen that these conditions exclude some activities which the world praises as good works, while recognising as such others unrecognised by the world.

For the performance of a good work :—

1. The doer must be in a state of grace. This follows necessarily from the fact of the fall. Of ourselves, we can do nothing to please God or merit His rewards. By grace we are united to Christ, so that He

works in us: we become "accepted in the Beloved"[1]: God accepts what we do in and through Christ, and rewards it.

2. The thing done must be without sin. For it is obvious that nothing sinful can please the holy God, or be good in His sight.

3. The thing done must be done with the intention of pleasing God. God is the supreme Object of all human activities, and no work can be good before Him which does not recognise this.

Any work performed under these three conditions, however trivial it may seem, is a "good work," meriting an eternal reward, and exercising that charity which is radical and fundamental in the Christian life.

This truth is far too little realised, and the failure to realise it is fraught

[1] Ephesians i. 6.

with loss. For the doctrine of good works opens out wondrous possibilities in the humblest and most ordinary of lives. It re-emphasises the truth, so little apprehended, that, to please God, we need not necessarily do very striking things. All we have to do is to keep in His grace and do the little ordinary actions of life for love of Him, keeping them from all that is blameworthy in His sight. We may please Him by the humblest task, the most ordinary action, if only we set ourselves to turn these things into "good works." "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do," writes St. Paul, "do all to the glory of God."[1] Thus the humblest Christian may be daily laying up for himself "treasures in heaven."

Many Christians make a daily

[1] 1 Cor. x. 31.

practice of what is called "the good intention." At the beginning of the day they offer to God the actions of the day, forming the intention of performing them for His glory. This practice is one to be commended, since it imparts to our actions a supernatural value. It is well, of course, if we are able to renew the intention from time to time during the day: and best of all if we can keep it actually present in the mind while we perform our actions, doing them, as it were, under the eye of Him for whose glory we wish to perform them, so that we can say with the Psalmist, "Even as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, even so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God."[1] But the intention once

[1] Ps. cxxiii. 2

formed is valid: the actions once offered to God become acceptable to Him, provided those who perform them are in a state of grace, and the actions themselves are free from sin. A very simple form of the good intention is sometimes taught to children, as follows:

> My God, I offer Thee this day
> All I shall think, or do, or say:
> Uniting it with what was done
> On earth by Jesus Christ Thy Son.

It will be noted that this form offers our actions with those of our Lord. It is only through Him that our actions can please God. They are His actions, performed in us by the energies of His grace. And it is fitting that we should offer with them His actions performed for us in His life on earth, asking that the perfections of His works may atone for the imperfections of ours.

The word charity, like many other

things, has been secularised. And, again, like many other things, it has lost incalculably by its divorce from religion. The failure of the world's charity is written large on the history of modern social legislation. Even in those activities which concern the amelioration of human want and misery, a human philanthropy which leaves God out of count can never achieve what true Christian charity, the love of God for Himself and of our neighbour for His sake, has actually achieved. This charity, which taught men to see behind the pauper the Poor Man of Nazareth, and in every sufferer a living crucifix, was permeated by that quality of reverence for humanity in its need in which humanitarianism most fails. The religious quality of its benefactions saved them from exalting the pride of the benefactor or lowering the

dignity of the beneficiary. Even now the social question is becoming the despair of a civilisation which has divorced itself from religion. Like so many other problems, it can only be ultimately solved by Christianity, which goes to the root of all our evils in the corruption of human nature, and remedies it by the power of grace.

The virtue of Charity is exercised and strengthened, not only by actions, but by sufferings: not only by what we do for love of God, but by what we bear for love of Him. "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend."[1] And we measure the love of our Lord for us more, as a matter of fact, by what He suffered for us than by what He did. It is, therefore, inevitable that in the history of the

[1] St. John xv. 13.

Church charity should find constant exercise in the patient and joyful endurance of suffering for Him Who suffered for us. We have already seen that charity is exercised in devotion to the sacred Passion, and it is not surprising that a principal fruit of this devotion should be the willingness, and even the desire, to "suffer with Him."[1] The universal observance in the Church of the season of Lent testifies to this instinct of charity for suffering, not only accepted, but self-imposed. Since Christ fasted for us, we must needs set ourselves to fast for love of Him. And Christian asceticism, in all the lengths to which it has gone, the scourge, the hair-shirt, the hard bed, the foregoing of all comfort and the embracing of every suffering, only carries out further the same principle.

[1] Rom. viii. 9.

Since the day when the Apostles, beaten at the command of the Sanhedrin, departed, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name,"[1] men have shown their love for our Lord by desiring to suffer for Him.

It may well be that the great mortifications of the saints are not for humble Christians like ourselves. Such self-imposed sufferings require the humility of the saints to balance them. And with suffering as with action, charity finds its exercise in the realm of the commonplace. The best penances for us are those which the loving Providence of God imposes on us. And our daily sufferings, the weariness and vexations which beset us even in health, as well as the pain and sickness which may visit us; can be made the matter of a good

[1] Acts v. 41.

intention, and offered to God with the sufferings which redeemed us. Like our good works, they are meritorious, if they fulfil the conditions laid down; if, that is, the sufferer is in a state of grace, endures his sufferings without sin, and endures them for the glory of God. For He Who works in us, in virtue of our union with Him, also suffers in us, meriting in us, alike by good works and patient suffering, the rewards which He will Himself bestow.

In addition to the sufferings laid upon us by divine Providence, mortifications are imposed on us by the authority of the Church, as, for instance, the observance of days of fasting or abstinence. There is an unfortunate tendency to render a somewhat grudging obedience in this matter. We obey, but hardly joyfully. We recognise the authority of

the Church and submit to it, almost, as it were, under protest. We surely lose much when we make this discipline solely a matter of obedience. It can be far more. It should be an exercise of the charity which gladly embraces what is irksome for love of God.

Besides these mortifications, accepted under obedience, we find the necessity, in view of the needs of our spiritual life, of mortifications which we impose upon ourselves. Every rule of life, and almost every good resolution, inflicts upon us some measure of self-denial. Our temptations force us to deny ourselves in matters where our natural inclinations might lead us to excess: things which are pleasant to us, and in themselves harmless, become occasions of sin which must be avoided: we are led to mortify our senses and

impulses in all kinds of directions. All these mortifications, so necessary for us, may be turned into exercises of charity. To do this is a matter of direction of intention. We must learn to mortify ourselves, not only for the sake of our own souls, but out of love for God. The interior energies of charity must vitalise our outward actions and sufferings, turning them into channels which convey and reinforce our love for Him "Who first loved us."[1]

It is not our purpose to deal here at any length with more heroic mortifications, such as the use of the scourge—far more common than might be supposed among devout Christians—the wearing of a hair-shirt or some equivalent next to the skin, sleeping on the floor, or reducing the time of sleep to a minimum.

[1] 1 St. John iv. 19.

But this much must be said in any treatment of mortification: such mortifications as these may never be adopted except under authoritative direction. The danger of self-will is far too great to allow of individuals legislating for themselves in matters where much prudence is called for. A prudent regard for health and the ability to perform the duties laid upon us is essential, and calls for the help of skilled counsel. For most of us it will probably be time enough to think of greater mortifications when we have succeeded better in the endurance and direction of small and ordinary trials. Little mortifications, like ordinary actions, offer a field for the exercise of charity, and an opportunity for its increase which we have done too little as yet to explore.

CHAPTER VII

THE VIRTUES IN THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS

THE lives of Christians have proved to be the strongest arguments, both for Christianity and against it, and this naturally and inevitably. For a religion which is barren of fruits in the lives of those who practise it stands convicted of imbecility. And Christianity, above all religions, professes to bring a new life into the world, and therefore stands or falls by its practical effect. This new life, the life of grace, is three-fold, as we have seen, in its effects. Energising the mind, it produces illumination through the knowledge of God: strengthening

the will in the energies of hope, it brings an access of power : reinforcing the affections through charity, it brings an increase of love. If the claim of our religion to set in motion these new forces be a true one, we shall look to see their evidences in the past and present history of Christian life.

Looking at the lives of ordinary Christians by whom we are surrounded, it is not easy to find the overwhelming evidence that we might expect of the presence of these three forces of light, power and love: and that for several reasons. The first is that, while there are many who profess the Christian religion, there are few in comparison who practise it. The world, we know, is apt to judge religion by its professors, and to condemn it. It must be judged rather by those who practise it, a far smaller

body. Even here, it is not easy always to trace any overwhelming results of its secret forces. It is less easy in our age and circumstances than it has been in other times and places. For the forces of Christianity have been so knit up into the making of our civilisation that we are apt to regard them as inherent in civilised humanity and to overlook their source. For generations the baptismal gift has been almost universally given, and the use of other sacraments has been fairly general. Even those who have been untouched by sacramental grace have been moulded by its forces acting on society behind them and around them. The degrees in which grace has acted upon individuals, to differentiate them from other individuals, have been varied: the weaknesses of our fallen humanity have been mingled with the new

forces, producing almost imperceptible gradations from those who, rejecting Christianity and refusing grace, have yet owed something to its power in their environment, through the vast numbers of those who give to grace a greater or lesser opportunity by their co-operation, up to the few whose surrender to it, and triumph by it, has been really effectual. In the early days of Christianity, when the little Christian society stood out from the paganism of the Roman Empire, the fruits of grace, not necessarily more abundant, were more conspicuous. And the early Christian apologists pointed triumphantly to them as evidence of the truth of Christianity which could not be rebutted. A similar contrast between the Christian society and surrounding heathenism in the mission field throws into relief the effects of grace.

Father Goreh, a high-caste Brahman converted in India and baptised in 1848, gives remarkable testimony on this point. Asked by a Brahman priest what he had got by becoming a Christian, he replied that "he had a power over sin which he did not possess as a Hindu."[1] Prepared for baptism by those whose theology was inadequate, he wrote some years later: "No one taught us that there were so many inexpressible glorious gifts bestowed freely by the love of God in Baptism."[2] In his teaching and preaching he insisted again and again on the contrast between the Christian and the heathen life. He found in Hinduism "such perfect confusion between essential right and wrong, in the strongest possible contrast to the Christian commandments

[1] "Life of Father Goreh" (Longmans, 1900), p. 269.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 116.

and intuition."[1] Again we read: "He contrasted the darkness of Hinduism with the light of the Gospel."[2]

But the most striking evidence of the power of grace is to be found, as might be expected, in the lives of those who have given grace free play in their souls, the great saints which every age in the history of the Church has known. By their diligent co-operation with grace they have attained to a heroic sanctity which has impressed their contemporaries by its power. In their lives, as they have come down to us, we find ample evidence of a singular illumination, a marvellous power, and a love manifestly unearthly.

The lives of the saints are too little known among English Christians, and it may serve a useful purpose if

[1] "Life of Father Goreh," p. 144. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 254.

we quote a few instances, typical of hundreds, of the exhibition in them of a special illumination, a remarkable power and a supernatural love. Many of these instances are of a miraculous character: and while some of them come to us guaranteed by unimpeachable evidence, others are less trustworthy in character. But whether such miracles be fact—as in some cases they undoubtedly are—or legend, they bear witness to the impression made by the saints on their contemporaries: an emphatic witness to their illumination, power and love. It is this power of grace arresting the attention of the world which is in truth a greater miracle than any particular achievement claimed as a manifestation of it.

First, then, let us glance at a few typical instances of the supernatural illumination of the saints, the fruit of

their heroic exercise of faith. The gift of foretelling future events is a feature recurring again and again in the lives of the saints of all ages. In many cases they are recorded to have prophesied great national events: in quite a remarkable proportion of cases they were favoured with a special revelation, often by vision, telling them the day of their death and entrance into glory. St. Catherine of Siena foretold the factions between rival Popes which rent Western Christendom a little before her death in the fourteenth century. St. Columba received in a vision the revelation that his death had been deferred four years in answer to the prayers of his spiritual children, and at the age of 77, when in perfect health, announced to his disciple Diermit, "To-day is called the Sabbath, or day of rest: such

will it be to me, putting an end to my labours." He then knelt before the altar, received the Blessed Sacrament, and quietly expired. Of St. Chad it is related that a week before his death angel choirs were heard to sing over his cell: he called his monks together and asked their prayers, since in seven days he must depart. A like story is told of St. Philip Neri. "In ten days I shall go," was his announcement on May 15, 1595. May 25 was Corpus Christi. He said his last Mass on this day, in perfect health, and went to bed at 11 p.m., with the words, "Well, at last one must die." He died three hours later. St. Romuald, St. Frances of Rome, and other saints too numerous to mention, similarly foretold their deaths, often many years before they occurred, and with some detail. St. Benedict saw in a

vision the soul of his sister, St. Scholastica, going to heaven in the form of a dove. Of saint after saint in the Latin Breviary lections we read the words that "God endowed him with the gift of prophecy."

Of St. John Chrysostom, the great Doctor of the fourth century, it was believed that St. Paul constantly appeared to him and dictated much of his writings and preachings. Such was the impression made on his hearers and readers of a supernatural insight into the writings of the Apostle. St. Nilus records of the same saint that at Mass he was wont to see "many of the blessed ones coming down from heaven in shining garments" and assisting at the holy mysteries. St. Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor, in an age keenly critical of intellectual systems, was accorded a like veneration, which he

has never lost, for an insight into religious questions which seemed clearly supernatural, and certain miracles recorded of him are of a character that matches his reputation.

St. Frances of Rome read her office at night by the light which her guardian angel shed round him. St. Lidwine, a suffering saint of Holland in the fourteenth century, obtained a knowledge of the holy places in Palestine, being carried by angels to view them. The Blessed Sebastian Valfré, in the seventeenth century, became aware supernaturally of sick persons needing the ministrations of a priest, and rose at night to visit them, unsummoned, with the sacraments. Similarly St. Camillus, of Lellis, famed for his devotion to the sick—he founded an order of Servants of the Sick—was credited with a knowledge of

the spiritual state of those to whom he ministered. St. Catherine of Ricci, a sixteenth-century saint with a special devotion to the holy souls, was said to know by revelation of the arrival of a soul in Purgatory and the hour of its release. To come down to quite recent times, St. John Baptist Vianney, the curé of Ars, frequently told his penitents of sins they had committed, before they confessed them, or after confession reminded them of sins they had forgotten or omitted to confess. And a supernatural illumination enabled him to pick out from the hundreds always waiting in church to make their confessions those whose need was most urgent. Quite a number of missionary saints, including St. Frances Xavier, were credited with the gift of tongues, so wonderfully did they impart to hearers of many

races a knowledge of religion. St. Hildegard, an abbess of the eleventh century, was renowned throughout Christendom, not only for her visions, but for her learning and practical wisdom. She wrote Latin with ease, although she was said never to have learned the language: she answered hard questions in theology with precision and accuracy. From all parts of Gaul and Germany people of all sorts and conditions came to seek her advice: she was consulted by Popes and Emperors, by learned men and religious orders.

These are a few instances out of many that might be adduced, but they will serve our purpose. This supernatural illumination of the saints, so abundantly testified, is not a thing apart. It is the exhibition to a unique degree of that light which comes by the exercise of faith.

Of that light the Church is full, through her union with the True Light: it is imparted to the faithful according to the measure of each, and increased according to the measure of their co-operation. The saints were "burning and shining lights"[1] who exhibited it with a clearness which arrested the attention of the world.

The power of the saints is no less strikingly attested than their supernatural illumination. Two remarkable examples of this power belong to the same period of history. The first is the classic meeting of St. Leo with Attila, the dreaded "Scourge of God," who was marching, fresh from the sack of the cities of Italy, upon the rich prize of Rome, when the saintly Pope turned him back. The other, less well known, is the deliver-

[1] St. John v. 35.

ance of Paris from the same chieftain by the prayers of St. Genevieve. Power with God and man[1] is the acknowledged prerogative of saintliness, and record after record of the influence of the saints, an influence lasting long after their death, from the day when Paul and Barnabas were hailed at Lystra as "gods come down in the likeness of men,"[2] through every successive age down to our own, witnesses to this power. The ecclesiastical miracles which illustrate it are abundant. As with the miracles of Holy Scripture, a large proportion take the form of healing. Sufferers from diseases which defy the medical skill of the age are healed, generally instantaneously, at the prayer or the touch of the saint.

[1] "I trembled when he entered my presence," said the Emperor Theodoric of St. Caesarius of Arles. "He has the face of an angel."

[2] Acts xiv. 11.

So St. John of Beverley made a dumb child speak. St. Casimir, King of Poland, gave sight to the blind, made the lame walk, and raised a dead girl to life. St. Benedict cast out devils and raised a peasant's son to life. St. Sebastian was famed for many miracles of healing. And the list might be indefinitely extended. Other miracles again show the power of the saints over the forces of nature. Thus St. Gregory Thaumaturgus is recorded to have removed by his prayers a mountain which interfered with the building of a church. Of St. David it is told that the ground on which he stood to preach gradually rose into a hill, to enable his words to reach a larger audience. Other saints were conveyed miraculously from place to place. St. Raymond of Pennafort, in the twelfth century, forbidden by the king of

Arragon to leave Majorca, was borne over the waves on his cloak to Barcelona: St. Peter of Nola, his fellow-worker in the foundation of the Order for the Redemption of Captives, left by the Moors without oar or sail in a ship they had scuttled, spread his cloak and was carried safely into the harbour of Valencia. St. Maurus walked on the water to rescue a drowning monk at the bidding of St. Benedict. Spiders wove a web across the hiding-place of St. Felix of Nola, to deliver him from his pursuers in the Decian persecution. Numerous miracles record the power of some saints, including the Curé d'Ars, to provide food for those in need. A long list of stories reveals the power of sanctity over the beasts. St. Thecla, the illustrious convert of St. Paul, exposed to the lions, suffered no harm:

they crouched before her and licked her feet. Similar accounts are numerous in the records of the early martyrs, and it is noteworthy that St. Ignatius, in his Letter to the Romans, expresses his desire that he may not be robbed of the glory of martyrdom in this way. "I pray," he wrote, "that they may not fail, as they have with other martyrs, to dare to touch my body." A wolf led St. Anthony to the desert retreat of St. Paul, the first Hermit, and this saint's grave was dug by two lions. Another hermit, St. Mark, healed the savage beasts in the desert of Scete. St. Benedict, like Elijah, was fed by ravens. St. Francis silenced the birds and converted a wolf. St. Anthony, of Padua, preached to the fishes.

As we have seen, it matters little whether these recorded miracles can

be regarded in every case as facts. Facts or legends, they attest the impression given of a singular power. It matters little, again, whether the miracles were worked in answer to prayer, or as the result of a power seemingly inherent in the presence or touch or word of the saint. For in both cases the explanation which the saints themselves give is the same. The secret of their power is the sanctification of the will by its union with the divine Will in the energies of hope. Their hope is also ours: and the embracing of the Will of God to which that hope leads is the secret in us of a liberty in His service, of a power with God, a power over self and circumstances which is the same in kind as the power by which the saints "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched

the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."[1] The only difference is one of degree.

There is no great sanctity without heroic charity. And the lives of the saints teem with examples of their abounding love for God and man, a charity triumphing over the natural inclinations of human nature to a degree which is clear evidence of its supernatural source. Father Damien, ministering to lepers and joyfully enduring a living martyrdom in consequence, is an instance which readily occurs to the mind. The ministry to the sick, including those whose sores made such ministry most repugnant, has afforded a most frequent exercise for the tender

[1] Heb. xi. 33, 43.

charity of the saints, who have rejoiced to kiss these sores. Other saints have endured captivity to release captives. Untold thousands have laid down their lives for love of God and their fellow-men. The patient endurance of suffering, so hard to human nature, is, as we have seen, one of the ways in which charity exercises itself. And the saints have practised, at the dictates of their overflowing charity, incredible austerities. A positive thirst for suffering, without which the burning love of the heart for God refused to be content, is a feature which meets us again and again in the stories of their lives: and the prayer of St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, "Let me suffer or let me die," might serve as the motto of hundreds like her.

The powers of evil are strong in the world. Human nature is com-

passed about with weakness. Life, as we see it round us, seems to testify abundantly to the evil and the weakness, until sometimes men wonder whether, after all, the Christian religion fulfils its promise of new light and power and love, whether grace is not a delusion, begotten of the instinctive yearning for high ideals which is so pathetic an accompaniment of human weakness and failure. The answer to such doubts is to be found in the abundant records of heroic sanctity. The saints have advertised to the world the presence in its midst of a power which could not be ignored, a power which was its own witness to the reinforcement by Christ of human energies.

CHAPTER VIII

THE VIRTUES CROWNED

FROM the thought of the theological virtues as strikingly illustrated in the lives of the saints on earth a natural transition leads us to the thought of these same virtues as consummated and crowned in the saints who reign with Christ in the glory of heaven.

Every doctrine of our holy religion should be reflected in our devotion, and, in the interests of our spiritual development, we cannot afford to neglect the doctrine of the communion of saints. To know something of the condition of the saints in glory not only feeds in us that "hope of glory" which is so great

an inducement to perseverance in the use of the means of grace and the warfare against sin : it also helps us to realise the possibilities for spiritual help which arise from our communion with them.

The life of glory in heaven is not merely the consequence of the life of grace upon earth : it is this life of grace continued and perfected to its utmost capacity. " Glory in reality," writes Father Faber, " is not an order distinct from grace, only a time and place and fixed ultimate condition of it." [1] And Father Benson has said, " Grace is glory in exile, and glory is grace at home." On earth our fallen nature, united to Christ as the principle of a new life, is being cleansed and perfected by grace. In glory the soul has attained its final perfection, to

[1] " Notes on Doctrinal and Spiritual Subjects," vol. I., p. 74.

be shared, after the resurrection, by the body.[1] Hence Holy Scripture calls the saints in glory "the spirits of just men made perfect."[2]

An important consequence of this truth of the identical nature of grace and glory is that growth in grace brings us in a real sense nearer to our brethren who reign in heaven. For every soul which by baptism has become a partner in the new life of grace, the communion of saints is a reality: it shares with them the new life in Christ, which is both grace and glory.[3] But the higher the relative perfection to which the soul attains by grace, the nearer is it to the absolute perfection of the life of glory. As

[1] That is to say, in the vast majority of cases. For it must not be forgotten that the resurrection of the body has been anticipated in the case of some saints (*vid.* St. Matt. xxvii. 52), notably, according to universal Christian opinion, in the case of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

[2] Heb. xii. 23.

[3] *Cp.* 2 St. Pet. i. 1-4.

it becomes more like the saints in heaven, it realises more and more clearly its communion with them. Hence, as we might expect, the great saints while on earth entered into a special closeness of communion with the saints in glory. We alluded in the last chapter to the special intimacy with St. Paul recorded of St. Chrysostom, and to his constant visions of the glorious saints, the "company of heaven," associating themselves with the worship of the Church on earth. Instances of a similar kind might be multiplied. St. John and St. Peter are said to have appeared together to St. Chrysostom on one occasion. St. Gregory of Nyssa relates how to St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, in doubt on some points of doctrine, our Lady appeared leading St. John the Evangelist, who taught him what he needed to

know. The same Apostle is recorded to have appeared constantly to St. Gertrude and to St. Bridget of Sweden, as also on one occasion to St. Edward the Confessor, who had a special devotion to him. St. Barbara appeared to St. Stanislas Kostka, of Poland, and St. John the Baptist to the Curé d'Ars. And, quite apart from such supernatural manifestations, we have abundant evidence for the fact that the saints in general enjoyed on earth a special nearness and intimacy with the blessed in heaven.

This is, after all, only what we might expect. The work of religion is to put earth in touch with heaven: the more we die to the world and live to God, seeking "those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," and where the saints share His throne and

glory,[1] the more real and present to us becomes the life round the throne to which we are hastening forward, and which is always near to us, although our earth-bound faculties may fail to penetrate the veil which hides it from us.

We have seen that grace is three-fold in its operation, energising the mind by Faith, the will by Hope, and the affections by Charity. It follows that the condition of glory is three-fold in its perfection. The mind is perfected in Light, Faith having passed into Vision: the will is perfected in Power, Hope having yielded to Fruition, the condition in which, in the fullest sense, the soul "reigns with Christ": [2] the love of God and man implanted by grace in the heart on earth passes into the perfection of Charity possible only

[1] *Vid.* Coloss. iii. 1.; Rev. iii. 21. [2] Rev. xxii. 5.

to those who see God as He is and know as they are known.[1]

It may help us to a clearer view of the condition of the saints in glory, and of its bearing on our communion with them if we consider separately these three categories of Light, Power and Love, which sum up the life of blessedness.

First, then, the saints in heaven see God. They embarked on earth on "the path of the just," which "shineth more and more unto the perfect day."[2] This "perfect day," where they "need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light,"[3] is theirs for ever. They

> "stand ever in the light,
> All rapture through and through
> In God's most holy sight."

In a sense they saw God on earth.

[1] 1 St. John iii. 2.; 1 Cor. xiii. 12. [2] Prov. iv. 18. [3] Rev. xxii. 5.

The vision of God by faith is a real vision, and constitutes a state of illumination in contrast with the darkness which encompasses those who are without the knowledge of God. But this vision of faith, varying in clearness according to the degree in which faith illuminates the soul, is at best imperfect. The vision of God is to the pure in heart,[1] and as long as we are on earth some taint of impurity remains. Hence on earth "we see through a glass darkly,"[2] with what St. John of the Cross calls "the clear but obscure light" of faith. In heaven all taint of impurity has been removed from the perfected soul: nothing can now dim its vision. The ignorance with which it was encompassed as a consequence of sin has fallen off from it: it "knows even as it is known."

[1] St. Matt. v. 8. [2] 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

What is the extent of this knowledge? Plainly it is not unlimited. To God alone may we attribute omniscience. Man, like all creatures, is limited in his capacities. There are certain things of which the very angels are ignorant. St. Thomas Aquinas, discussing very fully the knowledge of the saints in the beatific vision,[1] is careful to point out:

1. That the saints are "as the angels of God in heaven."[2] And he quotes St. Isidore as saying that "the angels know in the Word of God all things before they happen." All Christians have believed that the knowledge of the angels is very wonderful in its scope. Satan, a fallen angel, is credited with a knowledge of human affairs so vast as to seem, in comparison with the limita-

[1] *Summa Theologica*, Pt. iii. Suppl. Q. xcii. Art. 3.
[2] St. Matt. xxii. 30.

tions of fallen man, almost like omniscience. Yet Satan has been cast out of the light to dwell in the darkness. His knowledge cannot be that of the angels who "always behold the face of the Father."[1] The knowledge and the power of these glorious beings is altogether beyond our comprehension. The saints, who form with them the company of heaven, are raised above them in virtue of their union with the Incarnate Word, and are certainly not their inferiors in knowledge and power.

2. That, seeing God, the saints, like the angels, see in Him, not indeed all that He sees, but all that it concerns them to know. Their perfection of knowledge is not His perfection, but it is a perfection of its own kind. He quotes and endorses in this sense the words of St. Gregory:

[1] St. Matt. xviii. iv.

"Seeing that there in heaven they all alike see God clearly, how shall they be ignorant of anything who know Him that knoweth all things?"

This is teaching familiar to most of us in Dr. Wordsworth's hymn: the saints—

> "all truth and knowledge see
> In the Beatific Vision
> Of the Blessed Trinity."

This confidence of the knowledge of the saints has led Christians to invoke their intercessions. They are not ignorant about us, in the daylight where they dwell, as we, pilgrims travelling through the night, are ignorant about them. They know our conditions, and witness our struggles:[1] they know of our needs and our entreaties for their prayers: they know, better than we do, what is the will of God concerning us. If

[1] Heb. xii. 1.

we turn on earth for counsel and help to those who know us best, we may turn with a greater confidence to the friends of God in heaven, our friends for His sake, whose knowledge of all that concerns us is greater than we can imagine.

Secondly, the saints in heaven enjoy God. They possess Him on Whom on earth they set their hopes. Their wills are perfected by union with His Will. Here on earth grace gave them power, but it was power clogged and hindered by human infirmity. Joy was theirs in the sense of their unearthly powers: but it was a joy mingled with the tears which belong to man's sorrow-laden life on earth. That power was but a glimpse of the possibilities of the ultimate triumph. The saints in glory have laid aside all the infirmities of life in the flesh: every tear

has been wiped away:[1] their power is without admixture of weakness, their joy utter and unclouded. Holy Scripture speaks of them as "reigning with Christ," and employs the symbols of earthly sovereignty, the crown[2] and the throne[3], to impress this truth of an accession to power. Here again it is true, of course, that their great power must be distinguished from the omnipotence which belongs to God alone. Their power, like their knowledge, is derived from God, and is limited by the capacities of their perfected souls. But with them, as with the angels, we cannot but believe these capacities to lie far outside the range of our powers of definition. We can only dimly conjecture the extent of the perfection to which the soul attains in that

[1] Rev. xxi. 4.
[2] 2 Tim. iv. 8. Rev. ii. 10, iii. 11, iv. 4, etc.
[3] Rev. iii. 21.

state of glory. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." [1]

The saints, knowing our needs in the light of the Vision, are mighty to succour us. It is not only as friends who know us, but as princes exalted to a place of power, that we seek their aid. It is true that we have no certain knowledge of the precise manner in which they help us, although many hints may be found in the history of their cultus. The best and most authoritative tradition bids us ask them simply to pray for us, not because their power to help us is restricted solely to prayer, but because our knowledge is restricted. We ask God for gifts and graces which are His to give, through

[1] Cor. ii 9.

whatever agencies He may give them. We ask the saints to pray for us and with us, assured of their will and power to help us, according to the will of God; rejoicing in the possession of friends so powerful. He who puts down the mighty from their seat has exalted the humble and meek, and set them in the seats of the mighty. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory."[1]

Finally, the saints in heaven love God with a love utterly beyond anything that was possible on earth. Glimpses and foretastes of this rapturous love appear in the transports of the saints on earth. But it is wholly beyond our power to conceive of the depths of love possible to

[1] 1 Sam. ii. 8.

their extended capacities and purified affections in glory. Even on earth the love of the great saints was beyond the power of lesser men to measure. The adjective "seraphic" as applied, for example, to St. Francis of Assisi, is a confession of failure to measure his love for God. As inconceivably beyond our ken as the burning love of the seraphim is the perfected charity of the triumphant saints.

But again, like the thought of their knowledge and their power, the thought of their love increases the confidence with which we invoke them. There is no love of God possible without a corresponding love for man. It is the commandment of God "that he who loveth God love his brother also."[1] And we are the brethren of the saints, laying

[1] 1 St. John iv. 21.

upon them the obligation to love us, as we are under the obligation to love them, while the conditions of our struggle here below, in such contrast with the peace to which they have attained, give us a special claim upon their pitying love. On earth they were known for men and women who loved not God only, but their fellow-men, with a love beyond the ordinary. In heaven that love has been expanded with the deeper love of God which has become possible. As their minds have been conformed to the mind of Christ, their pattern in all things, and their wills to His Will, so their hearts have been made like His Heart. They know the place occupied by each one of us in the Heart of Him Who died to save us, and this is all that is needed to ensure their love for us. They know our needs: they are mighty to help us: they

desire above all things our salvation, for the love that they bear us.

"Grant us to be numbered with Thy Saints in glory everlasting." This is the constant prayer of sinners upon earth, faring forth on the supreme adventure which ends in the "happy harbour of the saints." Entering into the Ark of Christ's Church, and dowered with the grace which can illumine, fortify and kindle, we must persevere in its cultivation and exercise, "stedfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity."

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